

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

The Neutrality Debate 1794

Letter to the Editor of the Boston Gazette
1794

Messieurs EDES & SON,

Please do give the following a Place in your Republican Journal. That it is the policy of every nation to prepare for war in a time of peace, is fully exemplified in history, both ancient and modern; and that it has been too long neglected by Americans, must be evident to all who have given the subject a candid consideration. The money foolishly spent in the Indian war, would have defrayed the expense of building and equipping a small navy of ships, and of keeping our forts in repair; (and instead of carrying on that hitherto so unfortunate a war with the original inhabitants, by a proper management, their friendship might have been obtained with one quarter part the expense), instead of which they are gone to decay. But Americans, it is better late than never. Arouse. Consider your critical function. Prepare for the impending storm. Let your vessels be equipped, your forts rebuilt, and your magazines well stored with arms and ammunition. Some perhaps, will say (but only those of the Laco party) that the preceding regulations would be deemed by the British as an indication of hostilities. Suppose they were—their depredations upon our commerce is but little better than an open declaration of war. Contrary to the laws of neutrality, they seize, condemn and confiscate American property, without the least restrictions, whether it be contraband or not, and we remain idle spectators. Americans, affect your rights; demand restriction; and if that is denied us, take it by force; there is British property enough in America at this present time to compensate for every loss. But I am fearful if the blow is not struck immediately, the bait will disappear, as I doubt not care will be taken to secure it. I say again, strike while the iron is hot, and should war be the issue, you will be able to cope with them, by following at this time the dictates of reason, and prepare for war in a time of peace.

A SPY.

Modern Neutrality exemplified.
Editorial in the Virginia Chronicle
March 29, 1794

The United States on one side are enjoined by their government to act within the like of “imperial neutrality,” and the British on the

other by the orders of their government, are commanded to take for condemnation all American vessels “let their cargoes be what they may,” going to or from France or her colonies. In consequence of which our navigation is every day falling into their hands, and depredations made on our property on the high seas. On what ground then does America stand as a nation? Are we neutrals or principals? Are we at war or peace? If we are neutral, why do we not receive the privileges of neutrality? If we are at peace, why is our property subject to capture? Let us know our real national situation, and we shall then know what to do. But as we are at present circumstanced, we are losing our property and seamen, without being acquainted with any one principle upon which we are thus subject to depredations and insults.

But the most remarkable part of our situation is, that a captain of a man war shall arrive in our metropolis, and on public exchange declare that he is commissioned to take all American vessels; notwithstanding which he is permitted to supply his ship with provisions, to cruise on our coast against our trade. This is truly a modern refinement of neutrality. For a captain of man of war to come into the harbour of a sovereign nation to take provisions therefrom to enable him to continue at sea to capture all vessels coming into their port, is in fact carrying neutrality to the highest pitch of potentials, but disgraceful to the nation that suffers it.

Public Notice in the Virginia Chronicle
April 5, 1794

In the Name of the French Republic

Every Frenchman is forbid to violate the neutrality of the United States. All commissions or authorizations tending to infringe that neutrality are revoked and to be returned to the agents of the French Republic.

Philadelphia, Ventose 16th 2nd year of the French Republic and indivisible (March 6th, v.s.)

**THE MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE
FRENCH REPUBLIC.**

JH. FAUCHET.

The Editors of Newspapers within the United States are requested to republish the foregoing notice.

Editorial in the Virginia Chronicle

May 26, 1794

We learn that the merchants of New-York, who have lost property by the depredation of the British privateers, are preparing a memorial, to be laid before congress, requesting indemnification.

They request, if justice cannot be had any other way, that letters of Marque and reprisal may be granted them that they may do justice to themselves.

On the 17th ult. a committee of merchants (who have suffered depredations on their property by subjects of Great Britain and other belligerent powers,) from Boston, Charleston, Salem, Marblehead, Beverly, Newberry-Port, Gloucester, Manchester, Ipswich, and Danvers (Massachusetts,) met for the purpose of consulting and taking uniform measures respecting their losses; at which meeting a memorial was agreed on, to be presented to Congress, setting forth, that these depredations were committed, while pursuing the peaceable objects of commerce, without injuring or attempting to injure the rights of other nations, or violating, in the smallest degree, the known laws of neutrality; that in common with other classes of Citizens, their persons and property were under the protection of our own Government; and that, therefore, to that government they look for complete indemnification, trusting, at the same time, to their wisdom, respecting the Means of effecting so just and equitable an object. A Sub Committee was chosen, for the purpose of presenting the memorial agreed upon, to Congress; who set off on the 5th inst. for Philadelphia.

On Tuesday evening, the 27th inst. will be continued the question, *Whether, according to gospel rules, a man has a right to plurality of wives or not?* Should any audience wish to put a question for debate at a further period, they will please notify it to the President the next evening, that all debates may come in rotation. Entrance 1s6 each.

*From a Correspondent.
Published in the Federal Intelligencer*

November 26, 1794

Arrived yesterday morning, from Charleston, the ship *Swift Packet*. We have it from respectable authority, that she brings intelligence of three French frigates having chased an English one into our capes or, in British language, one of his majesty's frigates having seen three French men of war, was, from various circumstances, induced to bear away towards the Chesapeake, and cruise (alias, seek safety) within the capes. It were to be wished, from the insults heaped upon our flag by these same robbers, and on the same limits, and from the hostile measures of the British to the westward, that a broadside from the friends of our commerce, had sent the licensed pirate to the bottom. But the French, through respect to the neutrality of our nation, passed her unmolested. ■

Source

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